



## Personification And Simile On Sylvia Plath's Seven Selected Poems

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### ABSTRAK

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menemukan personifikasi dan simile dalam puisi-puisi Sylvia Plath. Peneliti menganalisis tujuh puisi; Sebuah Penampilan, Diantara Narcissi, Surat Cinta, Saingan, Kehidupan, Cermin, dan Lagu Pagi. Penelitian ini menggunakan deskriptif kualitatif khususnya penelitian dokumen. Pendekatan penelitian ini menggunakan kritik objektif. Data berupa kalimat yang diperoleh dengan melakukan beberapa langkah. Langkah pertama adalah membaca puisi. Yang kedua adalah daftar kiasan. Ketiga, mengidentifikasi kata, frase, dan atau kalimat yang mengandung personifikasi dan simile. Yang keempat adalah menganalisis. Dan yang kelima sebagai yang terakhir adalah menyimpulkan. Sebagai kesimpulan, peneliti menemukan personifikasi dan simile dalam ketujuh puisi pilihan Sylvia Plath; kata, frasa, dan bahkan kalimat.

**Kata Kunci:** Bahasa kiasan, personifikasi, simile.

### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this research is to find the personification and simile in Sylvia Plath's poems. The researcher analyzed seven poems; An Appearance , Among The Narcissi, Love Letter, The Rival, A life, Mirror, and Morning Song. This research used descriptive qualitative particularly document research. The approach of the research used objective criticism. The data were in the form of sentences gained by doing several step. The first step was reading the poems. The second was listing the figuratives. The third was identifying words, phrase, and or sentences that contained of personification and simile. The fourth was analyzing. And the fifth as the last is inferring. As conclusion, the researcher found of personification and simile in the seventh selected poems of Sylvia Plath; words, phrases, and even sentences.*

**Keywords:** Figurative language, personification, simile.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Longman Dictionary (1992:196) defines language as the system of human communication which consist of the structured arrangement of sounds (or their written representation) into larger units, e.g. morpheme, words, sentences, and utterances. In common usage it also can refer to non-human communication such as the “language” of the bees, the “language” of the dolphin.

When we talk about language we understand about literature, why? Because language is a tool for the writers to re-express their feeling becomes a stories like novel, film, drama or poems and all of that is a part of literature. Literature is a literary work that is written in a readable paper or a reading material consisting of letters, numbers and pictures.

Tjahjono (2004:54) states that “figurative language is one of the important elements to write poetry”. In writing a poem, the poet must be able to choose a right word that the readers can clearly understand the meaning of a poem.

Figurative is a proverbs in the form of sentence or group of words. In line with that, proverbs can also be interpreted as an indirect but implicit expression conveying something that the reader or hearer can understand said by Prihantini. M.H. Abrams says about the standard meaning of words and the standard order of words. First, Premiger quoted by Rina (teori dan aplikasi semiotic Michael Riffatere (2016:7) arti bahasa adalah arti meaning, sedangkan arti sastra adalah arti dari meaning of meaning. Dealing with what are saying by M.H. Abrams, standard meaning is the meaning of the language, while the standard order of words is the meaning the literature.

The meaning of literature especially can be found in literary work such as poetry. One of the poetry is from Sylvia Plath. The poems entitles, “Mirror” theme of the poem is about the truth and lies. Sylvia Plath wrote this poem to describe her own self. Her very short thirty year life was riddled with stress and depression. Even though she was a very smart and talented young woman, at the age of twenty she tried to commit suicide. In that poems we can found out the personification and the simile inside that. For the example of personification “I am silver and exact. I have no preconception”. It means “I” represents as a mirror. The mirror describes itself as a person. The example of Simile “Rises toward her day after day, Like a terrible fish”. Means It compares an old woman to a terrible fish.

There are a lot of things can be discussed in a poem, but the researcher here concentrated only on the analysis of the figurative language used in Sylvia Plath’s poems. That is the reason why the researcher proposes the proposal with the title “Personification and Simile on Sylvia Plath’s Seven Selected Poems”.

## **2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.2 Theory and Definitions**

#### **2.2.1 Figurative Language**

Laurie R. said that “figurative language – saying one thing in terms of another”. It means that figurative language is an expression used by person or the author indirectly by using the comparison. It cannot be interpreted literally because the comparison in figurative language expression has the meaning. Furthermore, Abrams explained that “Figurative language is a deviation from what speakers of a language apprehend as the ordinary or standard, significance or sequence of words, in order to achieve some special meaning or effect.” By this explanation, it can be said that this expression is different from the language that we use in daily activity.

#### **2.2.2 Definition of Personification and Simile**

A simile is an expression in which something is compared to something else by the use of a function (Gorys Keraf,2002; 139) Furthermore, Rozakis (1995: 36) explained that “A simile is comparison between unlike objects introduced by a connective word such as like, as, or than or a verb as seems.” Briefly, simile is the comparison of two distinctly different things but it is considered the same as helped by the connective words. In simile expression, other connective words that be found are compare, similar to and resemble.

(M.H. Abrams, 1999:99) Personification is an animate object or abstract concept is spoken of as though it were endowed with life or with human attributes or feelings.

## **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

In this research the writer used qualitative method, and descriptive qualitative method to describe the kinds, messages and the general meaning of figurative language used in some poems by Sylvia Plath. This research is a qualitative research with a qualitative descriptive approach. Qualitative research is research that does not use calculations or termed scientific research that emphasizes the natural character of data sources. The researcher used in this study is objectivity.

M.H. Abrams (1999:52)

The data source in this study divided into 2 part namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data source in this study is the seven selected poems of Sylvia Platt 2004. The secondary data can be books, other research, journals and some references that can support analyzing process and the secondary data information from this research is from the related source as previous study and journals.

The whole processed of content analysis can follow few steps, defined the statements of the problem to be addressed by the content analysis, defined the population in analyzing the data, the researcher took only some steps of content analysis as follow:

#### **1. Reading**

The first step of collecting data was reading seven selected poems by Sylvia Plath. It was the

beginning step to understand the poems about and found out the figurative language in the poems.

## 2. Listing

After the writer had finished read the poems, the writer listed the figurative language found in some poems by Sylvia Plath.

## 3. Identifying

In this step, the writer categorized the figurative language that found in some poems by Silvia Platt into some types of figurative languages.

## 4. Analyzing

After the third step above, then the writer tried to find the meaning of each figurative languages that found in some poems by Silvia Platt.

## 5. Inferring

In this step, the researcher made conclusion based on the result of the research.

# RESULT AND FINDINGS

## 4.1 Findings

### 1. Personification

Personification is describe inanimate object as if they have human nature. Personification makes nonhuman can act, speak, and has emotional feeling like human. Briefly, personification is the expression of language to create nonhuman life as if human. (e.g., The stone is crying, the bell is dancing). There are several personification in the seven selected poems by Sylvia Plath that written in the table below:

No	Poems	Personification
1	An Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The smile of iceboxes</li><li>- The stars are flashing</li><li>- Her eyelids say</li></ul>
2	Among The Narcissi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- He is quite blue; the terrible wind tries his breathing</li></ul>
3	Love Letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- “they turned to tears”</li></ul>
4	The Rival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- If the moon smiled, she would resemble you</li></ul>
5	A life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- At their feet, the sea waves bow in single file</li><li>- Overhead, the clouds sit tasseled and fancy</li></ul>

No	Poems	Personification
		- The light falls without letup, blindingly
6	Mirror	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.</li> <li>- Whatever I see I swallow immediately</li> <li>- Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.</li> <li>- It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long</li> </ul>
7	Morning Song	- Effacement at the wind's hand

## 2. Simile

Simile is an expression in which something is compared to something else by the use of a function. The comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind, used to make a description more emphatic or vivid (e.g., *light as a feather*, *smooth like butter*). *There are several simile in the seven selected poems by Sylvia Plath that written in the table below:*

No	Poems	Simile
1	An Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exit like kisses</li> <li>- The stars are flashing like terrible numerals.</li> </ul>
2	Among The Narcissi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spry, wry, and gray as the March sticks,</li> <li>- The flowers vivid as bandages, and the man mending.</li> </ul>
3	Love Letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- though, like a stone, unbothered by it.</li> <li>- Masked among black rocks as a black rock</li> <li>- Like my neighbors, taking no pleasure</li> <li>- And I slept on like a bent finger.</li> <li>- Limpid as spirits, many stones lay</li> <li>- To pour myself out like a fluid</li> <li>- My finger-length grew lucent as glass.</li> <li>- Pure as a pane of ice. It's a gift.</li> </ul>
4	The Rival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spiteful as a woman, but no so nervous,</li> <li>- White and black, expansive as carbon monoxide</li> </ul>

No	Poems	Simile
5	A life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Touch it: it won't shrink like an eyeball,</li> <li>- This egg-shaped bailiwick, clear as a tear.</li> <li>- Palm-spear and lily distinct as flora in the vast</li> <li>- The inhabitants are light as cork,</li> <li>- short-reined, pawing like paradeground horses.</li> <li>- As Victorian cushions. This family</li> <li>- They ring true, like good china.</li> <li>- With no attachments, like a foetus in a bottle</li> <li>- Age and terror, like nurses, attend her,</li> </ul>
6	Mirror	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rises toward her day after day, Like a terrible fish</li> </ul>
7	Morning Song	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Love set you going like a fat gold watch</li> <li>- Shadows our safety. We stand round blankly as walls</li> <li>- Your mouth opens clean as a cat's</li> <li>- The clear vowels rise like balloons</li> </ul>

## 4.2 Discussion

### 1. Discussion in Personification of the 7th Poems

#### a. An Appearance

The figurative language in the poem "An Appearance" consists of three personifications`

Silvia Plath uses personification by "An Appearance" like a human being, it starts from the first line "the smile of iceboxes. Here, "the smile iceboxes" is an appearance like iceboxes which can smile. An iceboxes personify itself that can smile.

In line twelve, it has "a Swiss watch" is an appearance. Appearance attributes to beauty. It costs to an expensive Swiss watch. Appearance is like an expensive Swiss watch. As an implication, we sometimes judge the other just from their appearance. The critic here is stopping from judging somebody else appearance.

Personification was used by Plath is to visualize an object or a concept in human being. Plath is also expressing personification in last line 15: "her eyelids say". In the poem she gives an attribute of human being to her eyelids say as a human that can see. It

also personifies a talking eyes. That is all for an appearance which contains personification.

**b. Among the Narcissi**

The figurative language in the poem “among the narcissi” consists of a single personification. Plath uses personification by “among the narcissi” like a human being, it starts and ends in the eleventh line “*the terrible wind tries his breathing*”. The fact is that Plath uses an object of wind which act as human being, breathing. It tells to the audience that this is the art of literature.

**c. Love Letter**

The figurative language in the poem “*love letter*” consists of a single personification. Plath uses personification by “*love letter*” like a human being, it starts and ends in the 15<sup>th</sup> line “*they turned to tears*”. The fact is that Plath uses an object of cheeks which are the part of human body, but does not work as its function. Cheeks can only become red but can not cry whatever to tears.

**d. The Rival**

The figurative language in the poem “*the rival*” consists of a single personification. Plath uses personification by “*the rival*” like a human being, it starts and ends in the 1<sup>st</sup> line “*if the moon smiled*”. The fact is that Plath uses an object moon which act as human being, smiling even if it has no lips and cheeks. The moon here is our rival in a real competition for example debate. The 2<sup>nd</sup> personification is in line 11<sup>th</sup> “*the moon too*” it personifies acting like human being for example talking. The moon too is alluding to unanswerable (an act of talking or speaking).

**e. A Life**

The figurative language in “A Life” consists of four personification, and nine simile, they are;

Plath uses personification in the third stanza “at their feet, the sea waves bow in single file”. In here Plath used “the sea waves bow” in the poem she gives an attribute of human being to the sea waves it just acting like human as if it can bow like human can do. Plath is also expressing personification in line 15 in the third stanza: “Overhead, the clouds sit tasseled and fancy”. Again, Plath give an attribute to the clouds because it act like what human can do, as if the clouds can sit like what human always do. In the last personification that Sylvia put in this poem is in the line 20: “The light falls without letup, blindingly” again and again Sylvia give the light an attribute of human being because the light can falls like what human can do.

**f. Mirror**

The figurative language in “Mirror” consists of four personification, and one simile;

Plath uses personification by the mirror like a human being, it starts from

the first line “I am silver and exact. I have no preconception”. Here, the “I” is a mirror. The mirror personifies itself as a person that can speak, it tells that it has silver color and real but it has no prejudice which only judge and visualize what it sees. Personification was used to visualize an object or a concept in human being. Plath is also expressing personification in line 2: “Whatever I see I swallow immediately”. In the poem she gives an attribute of human being to the mirror as if a human can see. The mirror also can catch the image in front of it exactly whether the image is good or bad, tall or short, and beautiful or ugly. For the example, if the woman stands in front of mirror probably she wants to take a look whether she is beautiful or not so the mirror will reflect her as exactly as seen on the surface, it will display her with no hesitation.

Plath also uses personification in the first line:

*Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.*

*It is pink, with speckles. I have looked it so long*

*I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.*

*Faces and darkness separate us over and over*

“Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall”. Here, meditate is a human mannerism. Meditate usually is a way of people do something to calm and quiet their soul or they do just for being silent in one place so the mirror is taking in human habit. The mirror always stands by face to face on the wall every time and every day, usually it hangs on the wall also in one room if there is no one in front of it the wall will appear. The wall has a color, it is pink with many small spots. The mirror gazed it so long then the mirror begins to think that the wall is a part of the mirror heart, but there are the things that cut off the view of the wall it were the faces. The faces must be persons who look in the mirror to see themselves and if they went away the darkness falls there is nobody in front of it except the wall, so the faces and the darkness are flickered for the mirror, it separates the mirror and the wall over and over.

**g. Morning Song**

The figurative language in “Morning Song” consists of four simile, and one personification, they are;

It can be seen clearly that Plath uses personification in line 9: “Effacement at the wind’s hand”. On the poem she gives an attribute of human being to the wind as if it was a human that has a hand.

## 2. Discussion in Simile of the 7th Poems

### 1. An Appearance

The figurative language in the poem “An Appearance” consists of two simile.

*Exit like kisses*

The quotation above, Plath uses simile for comparing her lips with exit like kisses. Simile is a figure of speech in which a comparison is expressed by the specific use of a word or phrase such as, like, as, than, seems, or as if.

*The stars are flashing like terrible numeral*

The 2<sup>nd</sup> simile's quotation in the poem is in line 14<sup>th</sup> Plath compares an appearance between the *stars are flashing with a terrible numeral*. Stars are up the sky far away from earth and terrible numeral is mathematic which concern here to what we say the time of sadness.

### 2. Among the Narcissi

The figurative language in the poem “Among the Narcissi” consists of four similes.

*Spry, wry, gray as the March sticks*

The quotation above, Plath uses simile for comparing *Spry, wry, gray* with *the March sticks*.

*The flowers vivid as bandage*

The simile's quotation in the poem is in line 8<sup>th</sup> Plath compares the narcissi between the *flowers vivid* with *bandage*. Flowers vivid compares to bandage, here the simile quotation critic refers to a fully make up using by the narcissi. Flowers vivid are in the garden while bandage is in the hospital. Bandage we called it as the tools of medical.

*They suffer such attacks*

The simile's quotation in the poem is in line 8<sup>th</sup> Plath compares the narcissi between the *suffer* with *attacks*. *suffer* compares to attacks, here the simile quotation critic refers to the narcissi suffered by attacks. Suffer is a situation of bad accident while attack is a violence or crime.

*The narcissi look up like children, quickly and whitely*

The simile's quotation in the poem is in line 8<sup>th</sup> Plath compares the narcissi to the *children, quickly and whitely*. The critic here refers a stupidity of narcissi who look their selves as young and fully energy. But it is contrary to the fact that narcissi is not alike to the simile's quotation.

### 3. Love Letter

The figurative language in the poem “Among the Narcissi” consists of six similes.

*Like a stone*

The simile's quotation in the poem is in line 3<sup>rd</sup> Plath direct comparison is in this simile's quotation of *love letter* is like *a stone*. A stone is hard and resist to the weather and everything. That is why Plath compare alive or dead with stone.

*Black rocks as black rocks*

In line 10<sup>th</sup> Plath compares the love letter to the *Black rocks as black rocks*. Black rocks is noun phrase. This noun phrase is formed with adjective and noun. The meaning of the phrase rocks are black in color. Nowadays black rock is high cost rock. It is also the symbol of an expensive healthy rock. For example: it is used for healthy factory of Maifan, and Happy Dream.

*I slept on like a bent finger*

In line 19<sup>th</sup> Plath compares the love letter to *I slept on with a bent finger*. This comparison is like a personification. Do you think that can everyone sleeps on somebody else finger? If some of us can do this, it means we are magician. According to the researcher, the work art of Plath is artistically. *I slept on like a bent finger* compares the impossible of Love letter. In other words, Plath cannot live without her someone.

*To pour myself out like a fluid*

In line 26<sup>th</sup> Plath compares the love letter to *pour myself out with a fluid*. A fluid is a liquid which can change or not fix. Pour is to flow quickly in a continuous stream. Plath compares a fluid with her love. A fluid is a sense of love.

*My finger-length grew lucent as glass*

In line 30<sup>th</sup> Plath compares the love letter to *my finger length grew lucent with glass*. Glass is hard and usually transparent. Plath used glass to compare her love. Her love is transparent to her boyfriend.

*Pure as a pane of ice*

In line 36<sup>th</sup> Plath compares the love letter to *pure with a pane of ice*. Pure is clean and not containing any harmful substance. Then a pane of ice is a single sheet of glass in a window. Plath uses this simile to compare her loyalty to her boyfriend.

#### 4. The Rival

The figurative language in the poem “the rival” consists of a single simile.

*Spiteful as a woman.*

In line 9<sup>th</sup> Plath compares the rival with *Spiteful with as a woman*. Spiteful is behaving in unkind way in order to hurt or to upset somebody. Plath’s comparasion is very hot to the he art of woman. The literal meaning of this simile is unkind behaving is a woman. The rival compares to spiteful as a woman. This simile concern is to unkind behavior of a woman while the writer of a poem is a woman. This is the art of the work art literature.

*White and black, expansive as carbon monoxide*

From the sentence above, Plath uses simile for comparing with Carbone monoxide. *White and black with carbon monoxide* their comparison is in the adjective word expensive. The rival sometimes looks like black and white in color but as carbon

monoxide in other hand. Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas formed when carbon burns partly not completely. In short the rival is a color of poison. Sometimes they come as friend or a friend indeed.

## **5. A Life**

Plath use simile ini the first line:

*Touch it: it won't shrink like an eyeball,  
this egg-shaped bailiwick, clear as a tear.  
Here's yesterday, last year ---  
palm-spear and lily distinct as flora in the vast  
windless threadwork of a tapestry.*

From the sentence above, Plath uses simile for comparing something with an eyeball. Simile is a figure of speech in which a comparison is expressed by the specific use of a word or phrase such as, like, as, than, seems, or as if.

## **6. Mirror**

Plath uses simile in the last line:

*In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman  
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.*

From the sentence above, Plath uses simile for comparing the old woman with a terrible fish. Simile is a figure of speech in which a comparison is expressed by the specific use of a word or phrase such as, like, as, than, seems, or as if. In the poem there is a young girl that has been looking at the lake every day but after day she realizes that she is getting older like a terrible fish and she does not like, that is why Plath compares old woman such a terrible fish.

“I” also represents a lake. There is a woman looks at it, the lake also reflects her faithfully. In the first stanza, Mirror personifies a person that looks everything what is really there, whatever it sees it catches the thing exactly. It conveys a double meaning, the mirror both accepts what it sees without question and catches the images that it reflected. In the second stanza mirror personifies a lake. The lake is like the mirror, there is a woman now searches for what she really is in the lake and the lake reflects her faithfully. She is afraid to admit the truth but once she has reflected in the

lake the truth is open. The woman is getting old and she knows it deep inside but still does not have the courage to admit it to herself.

She is not happy about her appearance and denies the appearance which has reflected by the lake then she looks away to the joyful lies of the candles or the moon, in this case the candles and the moon represent people who lie to her, telling her that she is beautiful, maybe in her youth time she was beautiful but now she is getting older then she cries. Day after day she comes and goes looking herself, the lake always reflects her faithfully, her beauty begins to lost and she becomes old like a terrible fish. The poem is more than an object, it is about our thought processes when we reflect upon our youth and struggle with old age.

### **7. Morning Song**

In line 1: “Love set you going like a fat gold watch.” Plath used simile for comparing love to a watch. The image of the watch is fat and made from gold, it also describes the baby is fat. Gold is a precious and valuable thing especially in terms of the new baby it values to the mother. She also used simile in line 6: “We stand round blankly as walls” for comparing “We” as the family to the walls. The wall is blank, the family like parents, grandparents, aunts, cousins and friend are surprised that they are happy to look the baby’s coming into this world. They stand surprisedly and they thought are blank looks the baby like the wall of the hospital. Simile appears again in line 15: “Your mouth opens clean as a cat’s” for comparing the baby’s mouth opened like the cat’s mouth, when the baby was crying, it will open up its mouth as the cat opens its mouth to make sound, and the last simile in the last line: “The clear vowels rise like balloons” for comparing the vowel to the balloons. At the first time, the one thing that the baby does only crying, for the mother it makes some notes and after a while the baby makes same vowels or being to vocalize it is like look of the rising of balloons with splash of color.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

After the writer analyzed the Sylvia Plath’s works such as An appearance, Among the narcissi, Love letter, The rival, A life, Mirror, and Morning song there is something that can be concluded. The general conclusion of the seven poems is Plath used figurative language to make an effect in the poems, she used many varieties of figurative languages but in here the writer focus on analysis the simile, and personification in the poems.

Mirror poem is about the truth and lies, it tells about “I” that represents as a mirror. The “I” does not think about but show what is really there and also never judges, it just reflect the truthful. “I” also represents a lake. There is a woman looks at it, the lake also reflects her faithfully. Then, in Mirror, mirror becomes two different things but the function

as reflection is similarly. Firstly, mirror becomes a person that can see and think. Whatever it sees it catches the image exactly whether it is good or bad. Secondly, mirror becomes a lake. There is a woman looks and searches for what she really is on the lake and the lake reflect her faithfully that she is getting older.

Morning Song poem tells about the happiness of being a mother and welcomes her new infant. How happy when she knew she has born a baby and heard the first cry of the baby when born into the world, the family look happy too seeing the baby. Even though, being a new mother is not difficult, all day and night she must keep awake take care the baby but it is her job as the mother and her love and affection more than anything else. After analyzing this poem, the writer identified focus on two figures of speech that used in the poem, they are simile, and personification. The poem tells about a woman who being pregnant. Every woman knows many changes in the body or feeling when being pregnant, the body is getting larger even in stomach when the pregnancy progress and the feeling is mixed up but every woman will feel the pregnancy whether it feels glade or not there is nothing she can do other than to remain pregnant. After analyzing this poem, the writer finally found the figures of speech they are personification, and simile.

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